CENTRAL CONCEPTS IN OBJECT RELATIONS

- **Object.** An object is that to which a subject relates. Eg: I love my *children*, I fear *snakes,* I am angry with *my neighbor*." In object-relations theory, objects are usually persons, parts of persons, or symbols of one of these.
- **Representation** refers to the way the person has or possesses an object. **Object representation** is the mental representation of an object.
- An **external object** is an actual person, place or thing that a person has invested with emotional energy.
- An **internal object** is one person's representation of another, such as a reflection of the child's way of relating to the mother. It is a memory, idea, or fantasy about a person, place, or thing.
- **Self**. An internal image. Conscious and unconscious mental representations of oneself.
- **Self-object.** A loss of boundaries, where what is self and object are blurred and the distinction between self and external object is not clear. (This condition is called "confluence" in Gestalt Therapy.)
- **Part object**. This is an object that is part of a person, such as a hand or breast. The other is not recognized as a "whole object."
- **Whole object.** Another person who is recognized as having rights, feelings, needs, hopes, strengths, weaknesses, and insecurities just like one's own.
- **Object constancy**. Maintaining a lasting relationship with a specific object, or rejecting any substitute for such an object. Example of the latter: rejecting mothering from anyone except one's own mother.
- **Splitting**. This occurs when a person (especially a child) can't keep two contradictory thoughts or feelings in mind at the same time, and therefore keeps the conflicting feelings apart and focuses on just one of them.

Melanie Klein

Key ideas:

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SHOUT
SHARE
IT

Emphasized biological drives and instincts. **Infant experiences the "death instinct" as a fear of death or annihilation.** Fear of this destructive impulse within infant's self is transferred to an object that seems overpowering and uncontrollable in the helpless infant's fantasies.

- **Objects.** Drives are inherently aimed toward objects. The infant seeks milk from the breast. Breast that gives milk is good, breast that denies it bad. Object world during the first few months consists of gratifying and hostile parts of the infant's real world.
- **Psychic mechanisms** used by infant include splitting, introjection, projection, and projective identification.
- Projection: Infant believes an object has qualities that are actually the infant's own feelings.
- Introjection is the mental fantasy through which the infant takes in something perceived in the world (for example, internalizing danger and deprivation.)
- Projective identification--imaginatively splitting off part of oneself and attributing it to another in order to control the other. This often includes splitting, in the form of externalization of inner anxiety and anger.

D.W. WINNICOTT

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- Mother- infant interaction is crucial in infant growth and development.
- Satisfactory parental care, he said, includes three overlapping stages:

1. Holding
2. Mother and Infant Living together
3. Father, Mother and infant, all three living together.

(HOLDING includes actual physical holding, and caring for the child over time. It is psychological as well as physical.)

- As the infant moves from relative dependence toward independence, such terms are used as

1. good enough care
2. good enough environment
3. average expectable environment

4.facilitating environment.

- **True self**--this is the part of the infant that feels creative, spontaneous, and real. **False self**--is "built up on the basis of compliance." With "good enough" care the true self can emerge, but without it the false self emerges.
- **Transitional objects** are the infant's first not-me possessions, like a blanket or doll. They are tangible--can be held onto, grasped, hugged. They lessen the stress of separation and soothe the infant. **Transitional phenomena** are behaviors--repetitive actions like rocking, or fantasies, which serve the same function as transitional object.

Heinz Kohut

- **Self psychology**. Kohut labelled his version of object relations theory "self-psychology" and placed his primary emphasis on **Narcissism.** Kohut thought there are both healthy and unhealthy forms of narcissism.

1. Autonomous self
2. Fragmenting self
3. Over stimulated self
4. Overburdened self
5. Injured self
6. Understimulated self

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Margaret Mahler

- Separation-Individuation theory of child development
- along with Winnicott, place great emphasis on the importance of **holding** a child. This is true both for literal holding, which helps the child feel secure through body contact, and also psychological holding.
- Wrong holding can include ***not holding a child physically or psychologically when it needs to be held, or holding it too tightly in a way that is felt as smothering,*** so that individuality does not have a chance to develop."Don't push too fast, but don't hold too close for too long." If the mother isn't there for the child when it tries to move away, it forces the child to move away too soon.

MARGARET MAHLER'S CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Phase/Age	Cognition	Action
Autistic Birth to 4 weeks	State of half-asleep, half-awake	Major task is to achieve homeostatic equilibrium with the environment
Symbiotic 4 weeks to 5 months	Social smile characteristic (two to four months)	Dim awareness of caretaker but infant still functions as if he and caretaker are undifferentiated or fused.
Separation-Individuation		
Differentiation 5 to 10 months	Process of hatching from autistic shell, i.e., developing more alert sensorium that reflects cognitive and neurological maturation	* Beginning of comparative scanning, i.e., comparing what is and what is not mother * Characteristic anxiety: stranger anxiety, which involves curiosity and fear
Practicing 10 to 16 months	Beginning of this marked by upright locomotion -- child has new perspective and also mood of elation	* Mother used as home base * Characteristic anxiety: separation anxiety
Rapprochement 16 to 24 months	Infant now a toddler -- more aware of physical separateness, which dampens mood of elation * Child tries to bridge gap between himself and mother -- concretely seen as bringing objects to mother * Mother's efforts to help toddler often not perceived as helpful, temper tantrums typical	* Rapprochement crisis. Wanting to be soothed by mother and yet not be able to accept her help * Child stands on threshold of door not knowing which way to turn in helpless frustration * Resolution of crisis occurs as child's skills improve and child can get gratification from doing things alone.
Object Constancy 24 to 36 months	Child better able to cope with mother's absence and engage substitutes * Child can begin to feel comfortable with mother's absences by knowing she will return	* Gradual internalization of image of mother as reliable and stable * Through increasing verbal skills and better sense of time child can tolerate delay and endure separations

Henry Murray

- He developed a theory of personality that was organized in terms of motives, presses, and needs. Murray described needs as a "potentiality or readiness to respond in a certain way under certain given circumstances".

- Theories of personality based on needs and motives suggest that our *personalities are a reflection of behaviors controlled by needs*. While some needs are temporary and changing, other needs are more deeply seated in our nature.
- According to Murray, these psychogenic needs function mostly on the unconscious level but play a major role in our personality.

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